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APPLICATION

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FOR UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

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SPECIFICATION

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TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

BE IT KNOWN THAT I, ALEXANDER BALKO, a citizen of
25 GERMANY, have invented a new and useful CIGARETTE HOLDING AND
DISPENSING APPARATUS of which the following is a specification:

CIGARETTE HOLDING AND DISPENSING APPARATUS

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

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The present invention relates to cigarette holding devices and more particularly pertains to a new cigarette holding device for holding and dispensing a plurality of cigarettes.

15 Description of the Prior Art

The use of cigarette holding devices is known in the prior art. U.S. Patent No. 5,086,918 describes a device that includes a lever positioned on a fulcrum for pushing a cigarette out of a housing. Another type of cigarette holding device is U.S. Patent No. 5,503,268 having a sleeve positioned within a housing wherein the each of the sleeve and housing having alignable apertures therein for the dispensing of cigarettes. Yet another cigarette holding device is shown in U.S. Patent No. 5,265,717 which includes a mechanism for holding cigarettes and lighting such before finally dispensing the lighted cigarette.

While these devices fulfill their respective, particular objectives and requirements, the need remains for a device that efficiently holds and dispenses cigarettes. A dispensing assembly for the device should be inexpensive in its construction and preferably devoid of mechanical couplers which are prone to failure. It is also preferred that the device includes a compartment for holding a cigarette lighter.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention meets the needs presented above by providing
5 a housing for protecting a plurality of cigarettes. Within the housing is an
actuating assembly comprised of a single piece of plastic which is adapted
to open an aperture for accessing the cigarettes and for lifting one of the
cigarettes upwardly through the aperture. The single piece construction
allows the actuating assembly to be molded from plastic in a single step
10 and removes any inner couplers which may fail over time and render the
actuating assembly ineffective.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a new cigarette
holding device that includes a compartment for holding a cigarette lighter
15 such that an actuator of the cigarette lighter is exposed for usage.

To this end, the present invention generally comprises a housing
having a bottom wall, a front wall, a back wall, a first side wall and a
second side wall. A first dividing wall extends from the first side wall to
20 the second side wall. A second dividing wall extends between the first
dividing wall and the front wall. A first compartment is defined between
the first dividing wall and the back wall. A second compartment is
defined between the second dividing wall and the first side wall and a
third compartment is defined between the second dividing wall and the
25 second wall. The first dividing wall has a vertical slot therein extending
upwardly from the bottom wall and into the first and third compartments.
A covering is positioned on the housing and extends over the first and
third compartments. The covering has an aperture therein extending into
the third compartment and an opening extending through the cover extends
30 into the second compartment. A lighter may be positioned in the second
compartment and a plurality of cigarettes may be positioned in the third

compartment. An actuating assembly is mounted in the first compartment and extends into the third compartment through the first vertical slot for selectively lifting a cigarette upwardly through the aperture in the covering.

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There has thus been outlined, rather broadly, the more important features of the invention in order that the detailed description thereof that follows may be better understood, and in order that the present contribution to the art may be better appreciated. There are additional
10 features of the invention that will be described hereinafter and which will form the subject matter of the claims appended hereto.

The objects of the invention, along with the various features of novelty which characterize the invention, are pointed out with particularity
15 in the claims annexed to and forming a part of this disclosure.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The invention will be better understood and objects other than those
20 set forth above will become apparent when consideration is given to the following detailed description thereof. Such description makes reference to the annexed drawings wherein:

Figure 1 is a schematic perspective view of a cigarette holding and
25 dispensing apparatus according to the present invention.

Figure 2 is a schematic front view of the present invention.

Figure 3 is a schematic right side view of the present invention.

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Figure 4 is a schematic cross-sectional view taken along line 4-4 of Figure 3 of the present invention.

Figure 5 is a schematic cross-sectional view taken along line 4-4 of the present invention and showing the movement of the actuating assembly.

5 Figure 6 is a schematic cross-sectional view taken along line 6-6 of Figure 4 of the present invention.

Figure 7 is a schematic cross-sectional view taken along line 7-7 of Figure 5 of the present invention.

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Figure 8 is a schematic top view of the present invention.

Figure 9 is a schematic front view of the present invention having the front wall removed.

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

With reference now to the drawings, and in particular to Figures 1 through 9 thereof, a new cigarette holding device embodying the principles and concepts of the present invention and generally designated by the reference numeral 10 will be described.

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As best illustrated in Figures 1 through 9, the cigarette holding and dispensing apparatus 10 generally comprises a housing 12 having a bottom wall 13, a front wall 14, a back wall 15, a first side wall 16 and a second side wall 17. A first dividing wall 18 extends from the first side wall 16 to the second side wall 17. A second dividing wall 19 extends between the first dividing 18 wall and the front wall 14. The second dividing wall 19 is positioned nearer the first side wall 16 than the second side wall 17. A first compartment 21 is defined between the first dividing wall 18 and the back wall 15, a second compartment 22 is defined between the second dividing wall 19 and the first side wall 16 and a third compartment 23 is

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defined between the second dividing wall 19 and the second side wall 17. Figure 9 is shown without the front wall to better view the dividing wall 19 and the second 22 and third 23 compartments. The first dividing wall 18 has a vertical slot 24 therein extending upwardly from the bottom wall 13 and into the first 21 and third 23 compartments. The vertical slot 24 is positioned adjacent to the second dividing wall 19. A covering 25 is removably positioned on the housing for selectively opening or closing the housing 25. Interlocking shoulders 70 removably secure the covering 25 to the housing 12. The housing has an opening extending therethrough and into the second compartment 22. The covering 25 is spaced from the first dividing wall 18. An aperture 26 extends through the covering 25 and into the third compartment 23. The aperture 26 is positioned adjacent to the second dividing wall 19. A vertical guide wall 27 is positioned in the third compartment 23 and attached to the second dividing wall 19. The vertical guide wall 27 is positioned between the first dividing wall 18 and the front wall 14.

An actuating assembly 30 is mounted in the first compartment 21 and extends into the third compartment 23 for selectively lifting a cigarette upwardly through the aperture 26 in the covering 25. The actuating assembly 30 includes a lifting plate 31 positioned in the third compartment 23 and positioned adjacent to the vertical slot 24. A lifting arm 32 is positioned in the first compartment 21, extends through the slot 24 and is attached to the lifting plate 31. The lifting arm 32 includes a vertically orientated first arm 33 having an upper end 34 and a lower end 35. The upper end 34 is pivotally coupled to the first dividing wall 18 by a pivot member 48 and is positioned adjacent to the second side wall 17. A horizontally orientated second arm 36 has a first end 37 and a second end 38. The first end 37 of the second arm 36 is pivotally attached to the first dividing wall 18 by a pivot member 49 and is positioned adjacent to

the lower end 35 of the first arm 33. A foot 39 is integrally attached to and extends downwardly and away from the first end 37 of the second arm 36. The foot 39 extends toward the second side wall 17 so that it is angled with respect to the second arm 36. The second end 38 of the second arm 5 36 is positioned adjacent to an upper end of the slot 24. A leg 40 is attached to the second end 38 of the second arm 36 and extends downwardly therefrom. A bottom end of the leg 40 is integrally attached to the plate 31. A biasing member 41 is U-shaped and has a first end attached to the first arm 33 and a second end attached to the second arm 36 10 so that the biasing member 41 forms a cup having the foot 39 and lower end 35 of the first arm 33 therein and positioned adjacent to the bottom wall 13. A stop 42 is attached to the first dividing wall 18 and positioned adjacent to the second arm 36 and between the second arm 36 and the bottom wall 13. The stop 42 prevents the second arm 36 from moving 15 below horizontal and toward the bottom wall 13.

An actuator 45 is integrally coupled to the lifting arm 32 for selectively moving the lifting plate 31 upwardly such that a cigarette 6 positioned on the lifting plate 32 will be extended upwardly through the 20 aperture 26. The actuator 45 extends through the second side wall 17 and is attached to the first arm 33. The actuator 45 is positioned nearer the upper end 34 than the lower end 35 of the first arm 33. When the actuator 45 is depressed, the lower end 35 forces the foot 39 downward. The biasing member 41 pulls down the second arm 36 back to a horizontal 25 position. When the second arm 36 is rotated, the leg 40 is lifted and with it a cigarette 6 positioned thereon so that the cigarette 6 extends upwardly through the aperture 26.

A panel 50 is positioned between the covering 25 and the first 30 dividing wall 27. An opening arm 51 is attached to the panel 50 for

selectively moving the panel 50 from a first position closing the aperture 26 to a second position opening the aperture 26 and allowing the cigarette 6 to pass therethrough. The opening arm 51 is positioned in the first compartment 21 and is integrally coupled to the actuator 45 such that the opening arm 51 moves the panel 50 to the second position when the lifting arm 32 moves the plate 31 upwardly. The opening arm 51 includes a first elongated member 52 having first end 53 integrally attached to the panel 50 and a second end 54 positioned adjacent to said bottom wall 13. The first elongated member 52 has first bend 55, a second bend 56 and a third bend 57. Each of the first 55, second 56 and third 57 bends have generally the same angle such that the first elongated member 52 extends downwardly from the covering 25 to the first bend 55, extends downward and toward the first side wall 16 to the second bend 56, downward along the first side wall 16 to the third bend 57 and then downward and toward the second side wall 17. The second end 56 of the first elongated member 52 is positioned adjacent to the slot 24 and positioned between the slot 24 and the first side wall 16. A second elongated member 58 is integrally attached to and extends upwardly from the second end 54 of the first elongated member 52. A third elongated member 59 is integrally attached to and extends between a top end of the second elongated member 58 and the upper end 34 of the first arm 33 such that the third elongated member 59 is angled upwardly from second elongated member 58 to the first arm 33. A biasing arm 60 is integrally attached to the first arm 33 and extends toward and abuts the third elongated member 59. The biasing arm 60 is angled upwardly such that the biasing arm 60 and the third elongated member 59 form an angle directed toward the first arm 33 that has a measurement greater than 90 degrees.

When the actuator 45 is depressed, an end of the third elongated member 59 attached to the second elongated member 58 is moved

upwardly. This movement is aided by the biasing arm 60 which moves against and slides up the third elongated member 59. As the third elongated member 59 moves in this way, the second elongated member 58 moves the third bend 57 upwardly on the second end wall 17 and the top end of the second elongated member 58 moves toward the first elongated member 52. The bending between the first 52 and second 58 elongated members causes the first end 53 of the first elongated member 52 to move toward the second side wall 17 and bring the panel 50 with it so that the aperture 26 is opened. Since the lifting plate 31 is being moved upwardly at the same time, the panel 50 is only opened while a cigarette 6 is moving upwardly to and then through the aperture 26. When the actuator 45 is released, the biasing member 41 attempts to straighten and in doing so pulls the second arm down 36 and pulls the first arm 33 toward the second side wall 17. This rotates the third elongated member 59 back to its original position which again places the panel 50 in the closed position.

In use, a plurality of cigarettes 6 is positioned in the third compartment 23 by removing the covering 25 and positioning the cigarettes in the third compartment 23. The housing 12 is held at an angle so that one of the cigarettes 6 is positioned between the first dividing wall 18 and the guide wall 27 and on top of the plate 31. When the actuator 45 is depressed, the panel 50 is moved away from the aperture 26 and the plate 31 lifts the cigarette 6 upwardly through the aperture 26 so that the user of the apparatus 10 may grasp it. A lighter 8 may be positioned in the second compartment 22 by extending it through the opening 71 and so that an upper end of the lighter 8 is exposed for use. In this position, the lighter 8 may be used to light the cigarette 6. The housing 12 protects the cigarettes 6 and provides a convenient place for the lighter 8. It is an advantage of the actuating assembly 30 that it be constructed from one piece of molded plastic. The plastic is resiliently flexible and allows the apparatus 10 to lift a cigarette 6 and open the aperture 26 simultaneously

without any mechanical connections between the various components of the actuating assembly 10. This feature reduces cost of manufacture while also reducing the risk of operation failure.

5 With respect to the above description then, it is to be realized that the optimum dimensional relationships for the parts of the invention, to include variations in size, materials, shape, form, function and manner of operation, assembly and use, are deemed readily apparent and obvious to one skilled in the art, and all equivalent relationships to those illustrated
10 in the drawings and described in the specification are intended to be encompassed by the present invention.

 Therefore, the foregoing is considered as illustrative only of the principles of the invention. Further, since numerous modifications and
15 changes will readily occur to those skilled in the art, it is not desired to limit the invention to the exact construction and operation shown and described, and accordingly, all suitable modifications and equivalents may be resorted to, falling within the scope of the invention.